

Ars Amortentia

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Ars Amortentia

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Summary

"In a moment of horrifying clarity, you can't deny that you haven't known all along that James Potter has been in love with Severus Snape from pretty much the very first time he'd laid his eyes on the wretch of a boy... probably even before James himself had come to this startling realization"

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Slughorn's enthusiasm washes over you as he excitedly rambles on about the love potion you're going to be making today. Personally, you don't understand all the fuss and excitement of the other students. When one is as attractive as you are and can get almost anyone you want with naught more than a lazy wink and your patent charming, boyish smile, the thought of using a love potion seems completely ridiculous.

"Wonder which of this dense lot will try and sneak some poor sod a batch of the stuff," James whispers, smirking.

This is the most normal he's acted since before lunch, and you can't be happier for it. You let out an amused snort and lean back in, hunching closer to James.

"We taking bets?" You ask gamely. James can obviously read your mind because you both turn in unison to look at Dubia Moss.

The overweight Slytherin shifts forward, sweat beading unattractively on her forehead, and leans across the table as she leers seductively - *or tries to, anyway* - in Peter's direction.

You know you're a complete arse for it, but you can't help the bark of a laugh that escapes your throat as you survey the sad scene before you. James, to your right, is trying desperately not to show his amusement, but one look at Peter's pinched expression and he too is bursting with uncontrollable laughter.

Slughorn barely spares you a glance, already used to your obnoxiously frequent outbursts in class. But Evans, who's been hanging on to the Professor's every word, is clearly not amused and turns to give you both a scathing look.

Half the time she doesn't even know what you're laughing at, but she is always convinced that you are up to no good. (For the most part, she is always right).

Snape turns to glare at you and James, as well--or more accurately, turns to glare at *you*, but favors James with a neutral expression. You find this odd for the simple fact that Snivellus never pays any of the marauders any mind if he can help it, even when you all cause a scene in lessons.

James, strangely, sobers up almost immediately at this and ducks his head. Sensing the shift in mood, you too try your best to follow your mate's example.

You guess Prongs actually takes Lily's disapproval of your antics seriously now.

Shame, that.

For your friend though, you suppose you can reel yourself in every now and again. But you'll have to draw the line at Snivelly, who smirks triumphantly at you like the git's actually won something and haughtily turns away before you can shoot a well-deserved hex his way.

Beside James, Peter looks annoyed, but you know from experience that Wormtail will never say as much.

The professor wraps up his long-winded speech with his usual warning against rushing the potion-making process or purposely sabotaging another student's batch and risking a potential explosion, and looks pointedly at you and James as he murmurs that last part.

Then he joyously claps his hands and instructs for you to begin.

Peter scurries off to the cabinet in the back to gather the ingredients and your eyes flicker boredly to graze indiscriminately across your peers. James takes supplies from his bag and begins to pen the group write-up that is due at the end of class.

He is halfway done when Peter returns, eagerly lighting the cauldron and setting about starting on the assignment as if he is halfway decent, or competent, in the art of making potions.

You exchange a knowing eye-roll with James, who slaps Peter's hands away and shoos him off to the side as James expertly starts mixing in the ingredients himself.

Not many people know this about him, but Prongs isn't as hopeless in this subject as he so often pretends to be. It's just when paired with Snape, as he has been on numerous occasions in previous years, that your friend suddenly can't brew a simple cough suppressant to save his life.

The mere thought of Snivellus is enough to boil your blood again and you find your eyes flicking up to settle on said dungeon bat before you can even really help it.

At the very front of the room, a foot or so from Slughorn's desk, sits the hook-nosed boy, black hair falling in greasy clumps to curtain his face as he bends over his cauldron.

Every few seconds he mumbles something to Evans, who'll jot notes down on the long parchment before her.

What a kind, gorgeous bird like Evans sees in a dour, greasy git like Snape that makes her want to be his friend, you'll never know. Yet there Lily is, smiling fondly at Snivellus as she watches him work, clearly enthralled by his adeptness at brewing even the most complex of potions.

You look away in disgust and turn to find that James is a quarter of the way through, just letting the potion brew to a boil before adding in the Pixie's wings.

Peter is loudly complaining about how he can't wait for lessons to be over and James nods along absently, even though it's fairly obvious that he isn't paying any attention.

Instead his gaze is fixed to the front, watching intently as Snape huddles closer to Evans and peers over her shoulder to read what she's gotten down so far.

You expect James to be angry - the sight of Snivellus practically draping himself over Lily is understandably nauseating - but when you look at your friend's face, you find that James looks jealous - which is absurd considering that this is Snape for god's sake--Snape, who on his best day couldn't snag Effie Thompson - the homeliest bird at Hogwarts - if he slipped her a love potion and hid away her coke-bottle spectacles.

Really, besides the fact that Snape getting close to anyone and then *letting him* is a vomit-inducing thought in and of itself, there is virtually no reason for James to look so affronted. You're just about to tell him so when, as if he'd felt your eyes on him, the unattractive boy looks up, glowering in your direction.

Snivellus' beak scrunches in distaste as he levels you with what has to be the nastiest, most spiteful glare you've ever been on the receiving end of. Evans, who's been studiously reading over her parchment suddenly looks up as well and shoots you an equally baleful look.

She holds your gaze for only a moment though before squeezing her friend's shoulder and shaking her head, no doubt trying to convince him that 'Potter and his detestable friends', as Snape so contemptuously refers to you as, aren't worth it.

Begrudgingly, Snape breaks eye contact with you, but lets his gaze fall to James instead.

You expect him to scowl at Prongs as well, but are baffled to find that when Snape finally does catch James' eye, the sharp lines of his repulsive face soften slightly and there's a warmth to his sallow cheeks that you highly doubt has anything to do with the dungeon's humid atmosphere.

Immediately, you turn back to James, wondering what the bloody hell just happened and are about to ask as much, but find that Prongs' previous look of envy has vanished and that he is staring at Snape with what has to be the kindest expression you've ever witnessed your friend give the boy.

Stunned, you turn your attention back to the bubbling contents of the cauldron, watching as Peter anxiously tries to extinguish the flame before the concoction burns.

It is only when Peter bumps into James as he bustles about, anxious in his haste to right whatever wrongs James' inattention has caused, that Prongs finally comes back to himself and hurriedly helps Peter quell the fire and stir in the last of the ingredients.

You, for your part, make no move to help. There are too many thoughts - too many unanswered questions - racing through your mind for you to be of any assistance even if you cared enough to help.

James gives a final flick of his wand, having salvaged just enough of the potion to bottle up and hand in at the end of class.

Peter looks thoroughly deflated from his efforts, but Prongs barely spares him a glance before he turns to you, speaking as if nothing has happened, as if the cauldron isn't scorched blacker than before and as if him looking at Snivellus with anything but utter contempt isn't as mystifying or perplexing as it so thoroughly is.

Even though your friend's lips are moving and you hear him saying *something*, you only register the last bit of what James is saying.

“--and she *actually* thought I'd take her to the ball this year after the disaster she caused last time!”

Prongs shakes his head in disbelief and begins prattling off again.

As he's talking, he casts his eyes about, and Snape is of course, unsurprisingly, the first thing to catch his eye. James probably isn't even aware that he's doing it, but you can't deny that this is something you've been trying to remain blissfully ignorant about for as long as you've noticed it.

When you tune back in to James *still* spouting off about the bloody ball, you think you'd rather eat a bag full of puke flavored Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans than listen to a second more of this maddening talk of barfing girls and school dances.

You scoff and grab the write-up that you didn't help write from under James' bag, cutting James off just as he's getting to what he enthusiastically insists is 'the good part' to let him know that you're going to make yourself useful - for once - and hand the parchment in to Slughorn, hiding under the pretext of avoiding having to spend a second longer in the classroom once the bell rings than you have to.

Really though, you simply cannot stand another word out of James' mouth about his puking bird - or this strangeness he's displaying about Snape - and will use any excuse at this point to get a breather.

Slughorn absently takes the parchment from you when you hand it to him, much more concerned with the essays he's grading in front of him to spare even half a glance at James' half-arsed write-up. None of you take his class - or school, for that matter - as seriously as you should, but you haven't flunked out yet (a fact surely helped along by most all your teacher's glaring favoritism) so you can't even feel too bad about it.

As you make your way back to your seat, Genevieve Johnson's radiant smile catches your attention and for a brief second, you grace her with one of your own. The subsequent blush that warms her cheeks adds a gorgeous depth to her dark skin that makes you reconsider your decision not to ask anyone to the ball this year (although in your case, it's more 'accepting invitations' than any actual 'asking' on your part).

The thought almost instantaneously puts you in a better mood and you've even forgotten why you were so sour in the first place when you pass by a cheery Evans and glowering Snape.

A taunting remark is half-way past your lips already, but when you turn to sneer at him, Snivelly hasn't even noticed you, so engrossed in whatever he's looking at behind him that he couldn't care

less that you're gearing up to humiliate him in front of your peers for what has to be the billionth time this semester.

This, in turn, angers you - you're *Sirius Black* for Merlin's sake; no one--especially not Snivellus--ignores you - and you've half a mind to (quite literally) hex his pants off, but find this train of thought abruptly halted when you follow his line of sight to see just what commands his attention more than your seething presence.

You are, of course, not the slightest bit surprised when the bread crumb trail leads to none other than James Potter, and oh, *how you want to laugh...* Because *of course* it had to be James. Isn't it always? Snivellus hates him almost as much as he's captivated by him, so you can't really say you're too shocked that they're once again engaged in what looks to be the world's most intense staring match.

What does shock you, however, is the look on James' face - so heart-wrenchingly open and etched with emotion that you find it difficult to look at.

James (hilariously, if this situation was anything other than what it was) doesn't even notice you, awkwardly standing there watching him watch Snape.

He eventually seems to care enough to half-heartedly try not to be *too* obvious about it - attempting an indolent glare at Snape once he finally realizes what his face must look like - but even if you couldn't read James better than your favorite Quidditch magazines, it's far too late for anyone observing this pathetic scene to ever be fooled by such an unconvincing charade.

Behind James' cool, seemingly hateful stare is an emotion so visceral and heated, so deeply passionate and *dangerously* close to something you yourself have only come close to feeling once, that it makes you freeze, like a bucket of ice-water has just been dunked over your head in the dead of winter and soaked you through.

Everything that you've never wanted to think about and all the signs that hinted at something more - that you've willfully ignored since forever - suddenly play themselves out in your mind and you're forced to finally confront the one thing you've prayed you'd never have to.

You desperately want to cling to your ignorance, fool yourself once more into thinking that you'd had absolutely no inkling of what's been going on between them. That the signs haven't been there since third year when James had unceremoniously burst back into the dormitories one night, face glowing with a happy innocence and pride, lip's bitten cherry red and swollen. He'd almost shyly, *fondly* hummed about how perhaps working with Snivellus - whom he'd called *Severus*, for Merlin's sake - on their potions project wouldn't be so bad, when Remus had lightly teased him about it. But the cat's out of the bag now, isn't it?

In a moment of horrifying clarity that you've admittedly put off having *for years now*, you can't deny that you haven't known all along that James Potter has been in love with Severus Snape from pretty much the very first time he'd laid his eyes on the wretch of a boy, probably even before James himself had come to this startling realization.

Your mind helpfully flashes back to yet another memory of something that had occurred your fourth year, when James had briefly, unintentionally slipped up (*again*) and almost reverently called Snape 'Severus', half-way to helping the boy up after Sirius had not-so-accidentally shoved the git into the sharp end of an abrading statue--a far cry from the taunting 'Snivellus' the marauders had dubbed the unfortunate-looking boy since first they'd laid eyes on his hideous, miserable form their very first day at Hogwarts.

And honestly, your issue isn't even with the fact that James fancies blokes. Prongs, despite what he thinks, is hardly subtle about it. But that out of all of the admittedly fit ones you know, he just had to fancy the absolute *ugliest* creature you've ever had the misfortune of laying your eyes on--*this*, above all else, is what wounds you.

Suddenly, in the distant, fuzzy background, the bell rings, and just like that the spell is mercifully broken. Snivellus ducks his oily head almost immediately and turns back to help Evans pack away her belongings and clean up.

You don't miss the faint blush coloring his cheeks as he empties the last of the cauldron's contents with a fluid swish of his wand.

James smirks, looking fondly on as Snape mumbles something incoherent to Evans and almost trips in his haste to get his assignment up to Slughorn. Normally you'd have laughed, a cruel and cutting thing, but there's hardly anything normal - or funny - about this situation.

And it's of course only then that James' gaze falls on you, having seemingly *just* noticed you standing there, watching him. The smirk still playing faintly on his lips falters, and what seems like an eternity passes between you as you regard each other.

A knot twists itself uncomfortably in your stomach and you try desperately to keep your cool.

You have so many questions you want to ask and a multitude of things you want to say, but for once in your life, you opt for the safest, probably smartest option and decide to keep your mouth shut.

Even if James suddenly feels inclined to share with the class, you highly doubt you want to hear what he has to say.

So you smile, not as effortlessly as it has always come to you, but something close - something that'll have to do when you feel anything but the warmth and ease you're trying so desperately to portray.

James looks relieved, smiles back as you walk over and roll your eyes at Peter, waiting on him as always as he scurries about cleaning up and collecting his belongings.

But James is not stupid, and neither are you, for that matter; he knows this. You've known him since you were 11 and have been able to read him better than the back of your own hand since. You know him almost better than he knows himself, and he knows this too.

You can't help the hideously rude remark that tumbles past your lips when Dubia Moss waddles by, brushing past you and her hand 'accidentally' grazes your bum in the process. James loses it, nearly chokes on his spit as he howls with laughter.

But just like that, whatever awkwardness might have lingered between you is gone.

Neither of you forget, though; it's just something you'll never talk about. It'll hang in the air - in the sometimes uncomfortable, empty spaces between you - unsaid, for years to come--then sadly, regretfully, because your friend is dead and it's far too late, *forever*.

Years after James is gone and all that remains of Snape is a more hardened, ferociously callous version of the gangly teenage boy he'd once been, you'll wonder if you'd made the right choice; if never having acknowledged the one (and only) part of your best mate that he'd so desperately tried to keep hidden away from you, and that you'd - in turn - willed yourself to ignore, had been the right thing to do.

End Notes

Hope someone out there enjoyed this. If so, kudos are appreciated and comments are most emphatically welcomed!

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